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Comprehensive review of special political missions

Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/95, whereby the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventieth session, a report on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender participation, expertise and effectiveness in respect of all special political missions, and encouraged the Secretary-General to ensure the inclusion of relevant detailed information on these matters in the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The past year has been a particularly momentous period for special political missions. Across the world, these missions have been at the forefront of the United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and to build a durable peace. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere, special political missions have continued to push for a solution to complex conflicts, which have caused abject destruction, unspeakable death and suffering to civilians. These conflicts have also generated an unprecedented number of internally displaced persons and the largest flow of refugees since the Second World War, and bred a new generation of armed groups — many of which are driven by violent extremist agendas, thus adding additional urgency to finding political solutions. In Afghanistan and Iraq, United Nations political missions are supporting difficult political transitions and institution-building efforts in highly volatile environments. In Somalia, our mission on the ground is supporting the Federal Government and the Somali people to capitalize on the country's best chance for peace in a generation. In Cyprus, through the good offices of the Secretary-General, the United Nations has been working with the parties to help reach a settlement of a decades-long conflict. And in West Africa, Central Africa and Central Asia, our regional offices are working with Member States, regional organizations and civil society to enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention and to address transnational threats and challenges, such as water and energy scarcity, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime and violent extremism.

2. Over the past years, the international peace and security landscape has deteriorated rapidly. Following two decades of consistent decline, the number of active civil wars increased almost threefold between 2007 and 2014. Today, the number of battle-related deaths and major civil wars is back at the level at which it was in the mid-1990s. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world has reached a peak of 60 million people, and global humanitarian needs for 2015 are close to a record-setting $20 billion. Special political missions have been particularly affected by these developments. They remain one of the most utilized mechanisms of the Security Council, and the Organization more broadly, to address these deteriorating crises. Today, almost 90 per cent of special political mission personnel are working in peace operations covering countries experiencing high-intensity conflict. A recent study showed that 7 of the 11 countries facing the highest levels of threat from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist groups host special political missions.

3. In view of this complex new reality, and the challenges it poses not only for special political missions but also for peacekeeping operations, I appointed the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. I asked the Panel to explore the implications of the spread, intensity and changing nature of conflict on these missions, and propose ways to make them fit for purpose given the evolving and difficult context in which we operate. This was a daunting task, and I commend the Panel for successfully accomplishing it. I recently presented to Member States my report on the future of United Nations peace operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682), outlining my priorities through the end of my tenure as well as an action agenda containing more than 70 actions designed to strengthen peace operations. The messages from the Panel (see A/70/95-S/2015/446) and in my report are clear. The pursuit of political solutions to conflicts should lie at the heart of the United Nations

peace and security engagements. Our operations should protect the lives and advance the rights of people in conflict. Strengthened global-regional partnerships are key to implementing this common agenda. And to achieve this, we need to change the ways we plan and conduct our peace operations to make them faster and more responsive to the needs on the ground.

4. A central corollary of the two reports mentioned above is the message that the international community needs to change the way it does business. The sheer volume and complexity of current crises has stretched international conflict management mechanisms to the limit. The only real alternative is to expand the range of our responses and make a renewed and urgent commitment to conflict prevention and mediation, thereby enhancing our ability to stop crises before they escalate into violence.

5. The messages of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, as well as those contained in my own report, constitute a strong endorsement of the work carried out by special political missions. While these missions vary significantly in terms of mandate, structures and size, they share a common approach: the search for political solutions and the pacific settlement of disputes. This was highlighted in my first report on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (A/68/223). I noted that since political issues are, more often than not, at the heart of conflict, it should come as no surprise that political missions have been at the very core of the United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security since the establishment of the Organization. They remain as indispensable today as they have ever been.

6. This is my third report to the General Assembly on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions. Section II focuses on key developments during the reporting period. Section III addresses the different reviews carried out in 2015, with a particular focus on the review of peace operations, and notes key policy issues pertaining to special political missions. Section IV addresses the efforts we have undertaken towards improving transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender participation, expertise and effectiveness of special political missions. The final section contains some observations on the way forward.

II. Key developments during the reporting period

7. On 31 December 2014, the United Nations Office in Burundi completed its mandate and transferred its responsibilities to the United Nations country team. At the request of the Government of Burundi, and pursuant to Security Council resolution 2137 (2014), the Organization deployed the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB), which started its operations on 1 January 2015, to monitor and report on the electoral process in the country.

8. In Libya, the resumption of hostilities among various armed groups created a major security risk that led the mission to evacuate and start to operate, on a temporary basis, from Tunisia. Following a strategic assessment, the mission's structure was reviewed to better adjust to this relocation and the changing circumstances in the country. Meanwhile, my Special Representative continues to work with the parties to broker a peace agreement and a government of national unity.

9. In March 2015, the United Nations conducted a strategic assessment review of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in advance of its mandate renewal. Among other issues, the review recommended an increase in the mandating cycle for the Office from 18 to 36 months, to allow UNOCA to cover the current electoral cycle in the subregion and align its periodicity with the mandate of other regional offices. The review also recommended that the new mandate of UNOCA be articulated around four main objectives, including good offices and the enhancement of subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation. To achieve this, it recommended a strengthening of the capacities of UNOCA, including a dedicated political reporting and analysis unit (see S/2015/339, para. 82). The Security Council welcomed the recommendations of the review (see S/PRST/2015/12).

10. In Yemen, the rapid deterioration of the security situation on the ground also led to the evacuation of the Sana'a-based staff members from the Office of the Special Adviser. In its resolution 2201 (2015), the Security Council requested me to propose options for the strengthening of the Office. This Office is now headed by a Special Envoy, who continues to pursue a negotiated solution to the crisis.

11. On 27 August 2014, the Security Council, in its resolution 2174 (2014), reinforced the arms embargo in relation to Libya and further elaborated the sanctions designation criteria. The Council also requested the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1973 (2011) to provide information on individuals and entities who met the updated designation criteria; as a result, a considerable portion of the Panel's final report under resolution 2144 (2014) (S/2015/128), was devoted to describing acts that, in the Panel's assessment, fell within the updated criteria. In its resolution 2213 (2015), the Council again further elaborated the sanctions designation criteria.

12. On 9 December 2014, the Security Council, in its resolution 2188 (2014), requested me to update his 2014 sanctions assessment on Liberia. In a letter to the President of the Council dated 31 July 2015 (S/2015/590), I reported on the progress made by the Government of Liberia in implementing the recommendations on the proper management of arms and ammunition, including enacting the necessary legislative frameworks, and on facilitating the effective monitoring and management of the border regions between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

13. On 18 February 2015, the Security Council, in its resolution 2203 (2015), asked me to undertake an assessment of the sanctions regime in Guinea-Bissau. In my report on the progress made with regard to the stabilization of and restoration of constitutional order in the country (S/2015/619), which contains recommendations on the continuation of the sanctions regime in the post-election environment, I recommended that the Council consider the establishment of a panel of experts.

14. On 3 March 2015, in its resolution 2206 (2015), the Security Council adopted, for an initial period of one year, a sanctions regime for South Sudan consisting of an assets freeze and a travel ban. The Security Council established a sanctions committee to monitor the implementation of these measures and requested me to create, for an initial period of 13 months, a group of up to five experts ("Panel of Experts"), under the direction of that Committee.

15. On 14 April 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2216 (2015), in which it increased the size of the Panel of Experts on Yemen from four to five

members, in line with the expansion of the Panel's mandate to monitor the implementation of the targeted arms embargo measures imposed by paragraph 14 of the same resolution in relation to individuals and entities designated by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), or those acting on their behalf or at their direction.

III. Review of peace operations, review of the peacebuilding architecture and review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): key policy issues for special political missions

16. The current year has been marked by a number of reviews that have taken stock of the work of the United Nations in the area of peace and security. Of particular relevance for special political missions is the review of peace operations (see A/70/95-S/2015/446), which addressed both peacekeeping operations and special political missions, through the work of the High-level Independent Panel and my subsequent report on the future of United Nations peace operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682). In addition, two other reviews are currently in progress: the review of the peacebuilding architecture has entered its intergovernmental stage, following the presentation of the report of the Advisory Group of Experts (A/69/968-S/2015/490); and the review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security will be taken up by the Council in October. Without prejudging the outcome of these processes, the present section addresses some of the key policy issues raised in these reviews that are pertinent for special political missions.

Renewed emphasis on conflict prevention and mediation

17. The value of prevention, in terms of lives spared and resources saved, has rarely been more acutely felt. The demand for the good offices of the Secretary-General, including for mediation, has never been higher. As noted in the introduction, one of the key findings of the review of peace operations was the need to bring conflict prevention and mediation back to the fore. In my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, conflict prevention and mediation form one of the three axes of my action agenda. The report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture brings a similar message, highlighting that prevention of conflict, and not simply of relapse, is a critical component of efforts to sustain peace, and therefore should be treated as a priority.

18. Special political missions are one of the most important operational tools for prevention and for the discharge of the Secretary-General's good offices. Not all special political missions are deployed to preventive contexts. For example, our current missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya were mandated to support long-term transitions to peace. However, many special political missions are created with the precise objective of helping to prevent violent conflict, or to negotiate a peaceful solution to existing ones. Regional offices have a well-established preventive function and a track record of success. Other field-based missions, such as the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, have combined a good offices role with technical expertise to resolve territorial disputes through peaceful means. Special envoys have played an equally central role in defusing tensions and resolving

problems such as territorial questions, regional conflicts, constitutional and electoral crises, reunification negotiations, peace talks and a range of other issues. In many cases, these envoys have contributed to efforts to pull a country or region back from the brink of conflict.

19. The time is ripe for a renewed global commitment to prevention. While the rhetorical battle for prevention has been won, so far this has not translated into more political and operational commitments, including predictable resources. In my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, I have proposed a number of actions that would significantly strengthen the Organization's ability to prevent conflict. These range from strengthening United Nations core capacities for prevention and mediation and expanding the network of regional offices to developing rapidly deployable expertise and supporting the efforts of United Nations country teams. Many of these proposals will require the support of Member States, as well as smart, targeted investments in order to be successful. I will continue to pursue them through the appropriate intergovernmental processes.

Regional offices

20. The role of the three United Nations regional offices in West Africa, Central Africa and Central Asia was a particular focus of attention of the review of peace operations. In its report, the Panel — which visited the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in situ — noted that regional offices were a particularly effective new tool in the area of conflict prevention. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations recognized the critical and cost-effective contribution that these offices make through preventive diplomacy, good offices and mediation, providing the Organization with a mechanism for discreet consultations with Member States and regional organizations on emerging conflict situations.

21. The Panel also highlighted the ability of these offices to address transnational threats and challenges, and to foster subregional cooperation. For example, UNOWA has played an important role in helping Member States in the region address piracy off the Gulf of Guinea and, in addition, has supported the West Africa Coast Initiative to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the region. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia has worked closely with Member States to enhance subregional cooperation in areas such as water management and counter-terrorism. Similarly, UNOCA has played a lead role in support of the implementation of the United Nations Regional Strategy to Address the Threat and Impact of the Activities of the LRA, based on a request by the Security Council (see S/PRST/2015/12). When peacekeeping missions are deployed in their area of operation, regional offices can also support their political efforts, including in mediation and good offices. For example, my Special Representative for Central Africa serves as the United Nations representative to the international mediation on the crisis in the Central African Republic. Likewise, my then Special Representative for West Africa played an important role in support of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the crisis in 2010 and 2011.

22. My report on the future of United Nations peace operations concurred with the views of the Panel regarding the effectiveness of regional offices. Throughout my tenure, these offices have been one of the most valuable tools available for the United Nations in its efforts to defuse tensions and, at times, help to prevent large-scale violence. They are, in a nutshell, natural extensions of the Organization's core

mandates in the areas of prevention and mediation. The ongoing work of UNOWA in Burkina Faso, as well as its longstanding engagement in Guinea, for example, as well as the role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan during the crisis in 2010, underscore the importance of these offices.

23. In my report, I concurred with the recommendation of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations for the establishment of new regional offices, based on full consultations with Member States in the respective regions. I am confident that such new offices would help to strengthen the United Nations partnership with Member States in their respective regions, our cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations, and our ability to work with these actors in conflict prevention and peacemaking. I am exploring with regional and national partners in North Africa and West Asia, as well as in Southern Africa, the creation of such offices in those regions. It is also critical that we ensure that existing regional offices have the tools necessary to implement their mandates in a shifting global and regional context. In this connection, I welcome the establishment of a research and analysis section within UNOWA to support its good offices and mediation engagements, endorsed by the Security Council in its press statement of 9 July 2014 and approved by the General Assembly in its consideration of the budget of UNOWA for 2015, and based on the recommendations of a United Nations mandate review mission to the Office.

Partnerships with regional and subregional organizations

24. Strong and effective partnerships with regional and subregional organizations has been a central objective for special political missions over the past decade, as well as one of my core priorities. In my two previous reports on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, I described the importance of regional partnerships for the implementation of the complex mandates entrusted to our missions.

25. Regional partnerships were a common thread in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the report of the Advisory Group of Experts and my own report on the future of peace operations. This is not surprising. Together with our regional partners, the United Nations has long recognized that the global challenges we face today are too complex for any one organization to address on its own. Chapter VIII of the Charter has long provided us with a framework under which the United Nations and regional and subregional actors can join forces and build on their respective comparative advantages in peace and security engagements. This is not simply a rhetorical commitment; it makes a real difference on the ground.

26. With partners such as the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and others, the United Nations — including through special political missions — has undertaken joint mediation endeavours, set up regular forums for sharing country and regional risk analysis, established cooperation frameworks and helped others to build capacity in areas such as conflict prevention, mediation and electoral assistance. The regional offices in West Africa, Central Africa and Central Asia, as well as the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel, have specific mandates on regional cooperation, and work with regional organizations on a daily basis. Similarly, the United Nations

Office to the African Union was set up in Addis Ababa to better manage the capacity-building and coordination efforts of different parts of the Organization, and has enabled far greater coordination and cooperation in the area of peace and security.

27. The changing global landscape, with the emergence of more active regional and subregional actors, has created new functional demands for special political missions and a more sophisticated division of labour between the United Nations and regional actors. In Somalia, for example, where the African Union leads a peace support operation on the ground, the demands for substantive United Nations assistance were centred around the political process, constitutional assistance, the rule of law and security sector reform. The mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) was therefore crafted to meet these specific needs. The first Special Envoy's mission in the Syrian Arab Republic was designed as a joint mission between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. The United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS worked side-by-side to encourage political dialogue and forestall a deterioration of the political and security situations in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria. Similarly, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region works together with key regional and subregional organizations, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

28. My report to the General Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in mediation (A/70/328) describes our efforts to strengthen our work with regional partners to reinforce their mediation capacity and deepen our strategic and operational partnerships in carrying out mediation efforts. On the basis of extensive consultations with our regional partners, including through a retreat I hosted in May 2015 with the heads of 18 regional, subregional and other organizations, the report highlights the evolving mediation experience and capacities of the United Nations and its partners, and identifies different models of cooperation going forward. It stresses the importance of coherence, coordination and complementarity in mediation engagements, and recommends further work in several areas to strengthen cooperation for effective mediation.

Human rights

29. As I noted in my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, human rights are at the centre of our peace and security efforts. As a normative and principles-based organization, the United Nations needs to be guided by international human rights and humanitarian norms in all of its undertakings. As such, human rights are an integral component of every special political mission. Currently, six special political missions have a specific human rights monitoring mandate, and many of our missions are engaged in activities such as capacity-building and providing support to national authorities in the implementation of human rights norms and standards. United Nations system-wide policies, such as the human rights due diligence policy, are applicable to and currently being implemented by all special political missions. Through my Human Rights Up Front initiative, we have also been able to link up the Organization's political, development, humanitarian and human rights work in order to enhance our capacity

to identify signs of serious human rights abuses and potential conflict, and enable proactive and more effective preventive responses.

30. In my report, it was also noted that all United Nations peace operations today have the obligation to advocate and contribute to the protection of civilians. As part of their broader normative commitment to human rights, special political missions utilize non-military tools towards this end. Ultimately, a mission's political role can be the most effective strategy to protect civilians, by bringing the parties together around a peace agreement that addresses existing grievances and the root causes of conflict.

31. Special political missions have a menu of non-military strategies that can be relied upon in this regard, from human rights monitoring and advocacy to capacity-building of both governments and communities, and, when required, high-level political engagement. For example, in 2007 and 2008, the United Nations Mission in Nepal successfully mitigated local conflicts at key moments, when there was a risk that they would take on a communal character. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) regularly issue public reports on the protection of civilians, which detail violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of armed conflict. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) produces similar reports covering the broader human rights situation in the country. The engagement of UNAMA with all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, in particular, has played an important role in mitigating risks and threats against civilians.

Special political missions and peacebuilding

32. Over the years, special political missions have been important instruments for the implementation of peace consolidation agendas, in support of national stakeholders. They implement core peacebuilding mandates, such as support to the rule of law, security institutions and constitutional assistance. In three of the six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, special political missions are either deployed on the ground — in Burundi and Guinea-Bissau — or provide remote support — in Guinea. In Sierra Leone, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office successfully concluded its mandate in 2014 following the significant progress achieved by the country in consolidating peace.

33. The role of special political missions in peacebuilding is based on the understanding that transitions from conflict to peace are non-linear, complex and long-term processes, which require sustained international support. As the Advisory Group of Experts noted in its report, peacebuilding is an inherently political process. Peace agreements, after being signed, will often demand regular political engagement, and possibly mediation and dialogue, throughout their implementation phase, when general commitments need to be translated into specific actions. Tasks generally understood as "technical", such as constitutional and electoral assistance, rule of law support, security sector reform and human rights capacity-building, have fundamentally political implications in a peacebuilding context.

34. When deployed after a peace agreement, or following the departure of a peacekeeping operation that successfully completed a mandate involving early peacebuilding tasks, special political missions can be tailored to support national authorities to implement these multifaceted agendas. Through their regular reporting

to the Security Council, as well as interactions with the Peacebuilding Commission, these missions can help to mobilize and sustain international political attention to a peacebuilding process. They have also helped to advocate for international financial support and to align donor assistance around common peacebuilding priorities. In these contexts, special political missions are generally integrated with the agencies, funds and programmes that integrate the country team. This has helped to ensure that the United Nations can "deliver as one", providing coherent support to nationally owned peacebuilding goals. Sustained political support and integrated delivery of United Nations support are two best practices that have succeeded in the past, as the Advisory Group of Experts highlighted.

35. Special political missions now benefit systematically from access to the Peacebuilding Fund, which has become a crucial mechanism in linking their broad political engagement with more technical and programmatic work. These links are important to enhance the mission's support to national counterparts. Two of the priority areas of the Peacebuilding Fund are directly related to the mandate of special political missions: supporting the implementation of peace agreements and promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In this connection, the Peacebuilding Fund has in various instances helped to meet a critical resource gap on the ground, as missions have limited resources to implement the vital initiatives required to translate the general peace agreement into a concrete road map for peace. The ability of the Peacebuilding Fund to take investment risks to support political processes at critical junctures has been particularly critical in this regard. I welcome the call by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts for additional financial support to the Peacebuilding Fund.

Women and peace and security agenda

36. The fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is a pivotal moment for the women and peace and security agenda, which is integral to the work of special political missions. In order to contribute to the high-level review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and in line with resolution 2122 (2013), I commissioned a global study to highlight good practice examples, implementation gaps, as well as emerging trends and priorities for action. Of particular relevance to special political missions, the Global Study examined the impact of women's participation in conflict prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding.

37. The Global Study, as well as my upcoming report on women, peace and security, will add to the unequivocal message of the review of peace operations and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts in calling for increased and enhanced participation of women in all areas of our peace and security undertakings. This is not simply our duty on the basis of international legal and human rights obligation. It is a necessary condition for successful and effective United Nations engagement, as women's effective and meaningful participation is a key driver for sustainable peace.

38. The women and peace and security agenda has rapidly evolved in recent years. The number of mandates entrusted to different Secretariat entities, including the Department of Political Affairs, as well as special political missions on the ground, has consistently increased. Three specific priorities in this area will remain critical for the work of the Department, as well as the missions it manages: integrating the

women and peace and security agenda into the work of inclusive conflict prevention; an increased focus on women's participation in the arrangements for the monitoring and implementation of ceasefire and peace agreements; and expanding partnerships with relevant United Nations entities to link mediation tracks and engage civil society.

39. As the women and peace and security agenda expands, it is important that we strengthen our support to special political missions on the ground in these areas. As such, and as noted in my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs are putting in place arrangements to strengthen the provision of substantive and technical support to missions and to make full use of their respective comparative advantages.

Tailored and field-centred operations

40. A distinct trend that has driven the evolution of special political missions is the demand, by the Security Council and Member States, for missions that are tailored to contextual factors in the countries or regions in which they are deployed. This requires that the United Nations own internal policies and procedures be configured to support highly dynamic and fast-changing operations on the ground. In my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, I set out a number of actions that will contribute towards this goal.

41. Special political missions have been particularly flexible and adaptable mechanisms. This is related to the fact that their core functions of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding are highly contextual tasks that must be in tune with local realities, including to ensure that the mission responds to national priorities. In some contexts, field-based special political missions are deployed following the work of a special envoy, such as when a peace agreement is signed that requires United Nations follow-up on the ground. These situations provide the Organization with a natural sequenced approach to mission deployment, as the analysis, national contacts and experience of the envoy can inform the initial work of the mission on the ground.

42. In some cases, the Security Council may approve sequenced mandates for special political missions, whereby the mission is given an initial limited mandate to carry out political functions and identify key priorities, and subsequently return to the Security Council with a proposal for activities. In Libya, for example, the Security Council, by its resolution 2009 (2011), established UNSMIL in September 2011 for an initial period of three months, subsequently extended, with a limited number of mandated tasks. In March 2012, the Council, in its resolution 2040 (2012), reviewed the mandate of UNSMIL and specified a number of additional mandated tasks for the mission. The mandate continued to evolve over the following years. This sequenced approach allowed for the priorities of national stakeholders to be reflected in the UNSMIL mandate, which was crafted on the basis of consultations and advance planning.

43. Because of their inherent flexibility and functional diversity, special political missions have also been utilized by Member States to implement mandates that require highly specialized tasks. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the now concluded Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the elimination of the chemical weapons

programme of the Syrian Arab Republic are two examples of missions discharging a diverse range of specialized functions.

IV. Efforts towards improving transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender participation, expertise and effectiveness

Informal interactive dialogue with Member States

44. In its resolution 69/95, the General Assembly requested me to hold regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions. On 15 April 2015, the Department of Political Affairs, working closely with the Bureau of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), organized an interactive dialogue on the review of peace operations and key policy matters pertaining to special political missions. This discussion was an opportunity for Member States to informally share their views with members of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, who attended the session. It responded to substantial interest expressed by many delegations for a dedicated discussion on special political missions in the context of the review of peace operations.

45. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs delivered opening remarks, and highlighted some key issues and challenges that, from the perspective of the Department of Political Affairs, were affecting the effectiveness of special political missions on the ground. These ranged from rapidly evolving conflicts to fragile political frameworks and volatile security environments. He noted that the review of peace operations was indeed timely, and well placed to propose sustainable solutions to strengthen special political missions, which remained a critical peace and security mechanism. The Vice-Chair of the High-level Independent Panel also delivered opening remarks, briefed Member States on the Panel's deliberations and shared some initial findings.

46. During the discussion, 11 delegations took the floor to share their views with the High-level Independent Panel. Many of the participants welcomed the inclusion of special political missions in the review of peace operations, and highlighted a number of issues that could be addressed by the Panel in its report. Several of the participants underscored conflict prevention and mediation as priority areas, and recognized the role that special political missions played in this regard. Issues related to transparency and accountability were also highlighted in the discussion, and some of the speakers noted the need for more conceptual clarity for special political missions.

47. Going forward, I remain committed to holding additional interactive dialogues with Member States on other policy matters pertaining to special political missions, which are an important mechanism to inform and exchange views with Member States regarding the critical work undertaken by these missions.

Transparency and accountability

48. In the reporting period, significant efforts designed to improve transparency regarding United Nations peace operations at large, including special political missions, were continued. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations,

the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and the drafters of the Global Study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) carried out in-depth independent assessments of different facets of the work of special political missions, their mandates, key challenges and elements of success. The Panel on Peace Operations, in particular, carried out extensive consultations in all regions, as well as various bilateral and multilateral meetings in New York, which I strongly encouraged. To gather the views of the broader membership, the Panel also carried out a joint briefing to the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on 21 November 2014 and a briefing to the Security Council on 20 November 2014, and attended the interactive dialogue with the Fourth Committee described above. Similarly, my report on the future of United Nations peace operations was prepared on the basis of extensive consultations with delegations in New York. I am confident that through these consultative processes, Member States have not only gained insight into the work of special political missions, but were also able to share their views in an open and detailed manner.

49. The Secretariat's commitment to transparency and accountability extends beyond these reviews, and we regularly work to ensure that Member States, regional and subregional organizations and the broader public receive timely information on special political missions and their work. These include briefings to Member States, discussions with regional groups as well as individual Member States, consultations and cooperation with regional partners and regular interaction with the press and civil society at large. Recently, as part of this commitment, we relaunched the website of the Department of Political Affairs, which now includes in-depth information and data regarding the various special political missions it manages, as well as other engagements under the Secretary-General's good offices. The website is projected to be available in the six official languages of the United Nations by the end of 2015.

50. My various reports to the General Assembly and the Security Council on situations in which special political missions are directly involved, or issues which are relevant for their work, are yet another tool for ensuring transparency, accountability and visibility regarding the work of these missions. The reports, which are publicly available, provide updates on specific developments, critical information on the work of our missions, as well as my observations on the way forward. From 1 September 2014 to 1 September 2015, I have submitted 59 such reports to the relevant mandating body, mostly to the Security Council but also to the General Assembly, as appropriate. Of these, four reports cover country or regional issues that are directly related to or affect the work of special political missions, and 9 reports address thematic questions that have particular implications for these missions, such as peacebuilding, conflict-related sexual violence, or the women and peace and security agenda. In addition to these substantive reports, my regular budgetary reports to the Fifth Committee also include detailed information regarding mission structures, changes in mandate and detailed performance indicators.

51. My report on the future of United Nations peace operations makes a number of proposals aimed at enhancing the accountability of our operations on the ground, including special political missions, so as to empower them to deliver their mandates more effectively. In a nutshell, my proposals are based on the need to align authority and accountability with responsibilities, a global best practice for the administration of field-based organizations. They foresee, therefore, the

development of strong accountability frameworks to accompany the increased authority of field missions in a number of issue areas.

Geographical representation and women's participation

52. Both at Headquarters and in the field, the United Nations needs a staff of employees that is representative of its global presence and membership. This has been a core priority during my tenure.

53. I remain committed to the overall need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and gender representation when making selection decisions for senior leadership appointments in the field. In the identification of candidates for senior leadership posts in special political missions, close attention is paid to the overall goal of ensuring the broad geographical representation that is required of a universal organization. To that end, efforts have been made to bring greater succession planning and flexibility to the process of field appointments, including through the maintenance of a leadership database with profiles of potential candidates for senior leadership positions. The database is continually growing and updated through targeted outreach, with a particular focus on Member States that are underrepresented in field missions.

54. It has been a longstanding priority of mine to improve the representation of women in senior leadership, including in field-based special political missions. Since December 2006, at which time there was just one woman among all heads and deputy heads of mission, there has been an overall positive trend in the number of women serving in senior leadership positions in field missions. Progress remains fragile, however, owing to the small absolute numbers involved, and the departure or appointment of one or two individuals can cause significant fluctuations. This reaffirms the need to sustain the commitment to the goal of identifying and appointing female heads and deputy heads in field missions. The continued expansion of focused efforts, such as the High-level Mediation Course for current as well as the next generation of mediators, and the High-level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes, are essential to increasing the number of women available to serve in senior leadership positions within special political missions.

55. Enhancing women's participation in all aspects related to conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding is an important part of this agenda, and a core task of the Department of Political Affairs, shared with our special political missions on the ground. In the context of the review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the Global Study, the Department carried out an internal assessment to review the progress it had made in this area over the past five years. As the lead Department responsible for the majority of special political missions, including all field-based missions, this review is particularly relevant to assess progress made by these missions in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Dedicated field visits to Somalia, Cyprus and West Africa, as well as extensive interviews with special envoys and other senior officials at both Headquarters and in the field informed the internal assessment.

56. The internal assessment showed that the Department of Political Affairs has made steady progress in implementing the 15 commitments it has undertaken in respect of women and peace and security. It has mainstreamed gender into its policy and guidance documents and invested in new tools and trainings on gender and mediation for staff at all levels, including for its senior management and envoys, as

well as staff working in special political missions. Noteworthy progress has been achieved in these areas over the past five years. This includes an increase in the number of women in United Nations-led and co-led conflict mediation processes, as members of mediation teams, including gender experts, as well as negotiation delegations. More gender-relevant provisions are being included in ceasefires and peace agreements, and progress has been particularly notable in language related to sexual violence in conflict. In talks on Cyprus facilitated by the United Nations, the high-level, direct negotiations now also include the Gender Equality Technical Committee, which advises the leaders and their negotiators on the incorporation of a gender perspective within a settlement.

57. Similarly, in 2014, all my reports to the Security Council on special political missions included references to issues relating to women and peace and security. This is a marked improvement from previous years. The quality of this reporting also has improved, with an increasing number of missions now providing sex-disaggregated data in their analysis. Where in-mission gender expertise is available, such reporting is consistently of a higher standard. The most frequently reported issues focus on rights-based concerns and political participation.

58. While significant progress has been achieved, the review also identifies formidable challenges ahead. It calls for the Department of Political Affairs, and the broader United Nations system, to strengthen partnerships within the system as well as with Member States, to balance rhetorical commitment with greater financial commitment and to foster and strengthen the capacity of women and civil society leaders and networks.

Expertise and effectiveness

59. Given the various aspects of their mandates, as well as the light footprint of many missions, special political missions often have to rely on Headquarters-based expertise to support their regular work in the field. Some of the critical areas in which such support has been needed is for mediation and good offices efforts. Since taking office, I have promoted mediation and preventive diplomacy as critical tools. Operationally, the United Nations has developed rapidly deployable expertise that can support mediation efforts undertaken by special envoys and special political missions on the ground, as well as by other actors such as regional organizations, peacekeeping operations and Member States.

60. This expertise is managed by a dedicated Mediation Support Unit, which was established as part of the efforts to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs in 2009, and which now serves as a central hub for United Nations mediation support. One of the principal assets in the Organization's rapid response capacity is the Standby Team of mediation experts. These experts can be deployed within 72 hours of a request for mediation support. They have expertise in critical areas related to peace processes, such as process design, power-sharing, gender and inclusion issues, and security arrangements. In parallel, the Mediation Support Unit also maintains a roster of pre-vetted experts who can be deployed for longer-term engagements in the field.

61. Another area in which United Nations expertise has been increasingly requested by Member States is support to constitutional processes, including through special political missions on the ground. In order to enhance the level of support provided in this regard, the Department of Political Affairs has developed an

initiative to strengthen its capacity to provide constitutional support to missions, developing practical tools, enhancing system-wide coordination and providing capacity-building and awareness-raising programmes or technical constitutional support, when requested.

62. Numerous special political missions have a mandate to support national authorities in the conduct of credible elections, an area in which the United Nations has developed a significant amount of expertise in recent decades. In countries with peacekeeping, peacebuilding or special political missions, electoral assistance is delivered in a fully integrated manner, irrespective of whether the mission is structurally integrated. The Organization has continued to explore how to use its electoral assistance activities in a complementary way to other United Nations system activities in support of peaceful transitions, and to pursue opportunities to help build a conducive environment. In paragraph 30 of my most recent report on strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization (A/70/306), I drew attention to the importance of comprehensive strategies for the acceptance of election results and the prevention of violence around elections, involving broad engagement by the Organization. The number of system-wide electoral policies issued by the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance has continued to grow, strengthening the ability of special political missions to provide electoral assistance in a coherent and consistent manner.

63. The framework and modalities for what is now a single United Nations system-wide roster of electoral experts have also been developed, to continue the rapid deployment of pre-vetted electoral experts to support preventive diplomacy efforts and electoral processes. In that connection, the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs maintains the single roster utilized by all parts of the United Nations system to provide guidance to special political missions, peacekeeping operations, United Nations funds and programmes as well as technical assistance to Member States. The single roster covers a wide range of expertise related to electoral processes, including operations, logistics, information technology and voter registration, legal frameworks, gender issues, communications, civic and voter education and election security.

64. In order to further enhance the effectiveness of special political missions, the Department of Political Affairs has developed internal systems to take stock of specific experiences, develop relevant guidance and best practices, and train staff at all levels. Lessons learned exercises and after action reviews are now a regular feature of the work of special political missions, and allow for important institutional learning. Learning products are also uploaded onto a policy and practice database accessible to all staff at Headquarters and in the field. For example, a retreat of the senior officials of the United Nations regional offices for Central and West Africa, and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel, in April 2015, provided a unique opportunity to share lessons regarding their work. A relevant aspect of this learning process is the need to allow senior officials in special political missions to regularly interact and exchange experiences regarding challenges and good practices. In this connection, annual meetings of chiefs of staff, as well as of heads of political affairs components, now take place.

V. Observations

65. The deteriorating global peace and security landscape today, with the spread of highly violent, fast-changing and increasingly complex conflicts, has posed significant challenges for United Nations peace operations, and in particular for special political missions. Protracted and deadly civil wars, the spread of violent extremism, fragile peace agreements, tenuous political transitions and large-scale humanitarian crises are now common features of many of the situations in which special political missions are deployed. The implications of our collective failure to prevent or resolve conflicts are no longer confined to specific regions of the world. They affect all countries.

66. The independent peace and security reviews that have been carried out over the course of 2015, or which will be finalized in the coming months, have so far made an unambiguous and urgent call for change. The review of peace operations, in particular, has pointed to the need for the international community to make an immediate commitment to bringing conflict prevention and mediation back to the fore. The depth and diversity of the global challenge also demands that we employ a more flexible, adaptable and varied peace and security toolbox. As the present report has shown, special political missions are some of the most important of these tools. They are, in effect, an indispensable instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security and the most systematic and visible manifestation of the Secretary-General's good offices.

67. These necessary changes are a collective responsibility of the entire membership. As I noted in my report on the future of United Nations peace operations, I have already committed to implementing an agenda for action to strengthen our missions. But real change also requires the sustained commitment of Member States, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, to adapt peace operations to today's realities. Investments will be required; not in large amounts, but smart and targeted investments in activities that we know can make a real difference to prevent and resolve conflict and build a sustainable peace.

68. In concluding, I would like to pay tribute to my special representatives, envoys and advisers, as well as to the dedicated and courageous United Nations staff serving in these missions. Their work, often in some of the most difficult and dangerous context in support of peace, is an example to all of us.

Annex

United Nations special political missions (as at 30 September 2015)

Special Envoys

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region
3. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar
4. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
5. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel
6. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan
7. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
8. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
9. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen
10. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
11. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions

Sanctions panels and monitoring groups

12. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea
13. Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire
14. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
15. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
16. Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran
17. Panel of Experts on Liberia
18. Panel of Experts on Libya
19. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
20. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
21. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
22. Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)

23. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
24. Panel of Experts on Yemen
25. Panel of Experts on South Sudan

Field-based missions

26. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
27. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process[a]
28. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
29. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
30. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
31. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
32. United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi
33. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
34. United Nations Office for West Africa
35. United Nations Office to the African Union[b]
36. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
37. United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
38. United Nations Support Mission in Libya

[a] Funded from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.

[b] Funded partially from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.